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THE ORDER
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In the aftermath of the civil war that pitted hero against hero, Iron Man, a.k.a. Tony Stark, envisioned a new world order-one of responsibility and supervision, where super heroes are federally registered and held accountable to the people they protect. As the new director of the peacekeeping agency S.H.I.E.L.D., Stark personally took charge, creating the 50-State Initiative: A program placing highly trained super hero teams in each state of the nation. The Order is the first such team. Based in California, it is the crown jewel of the Initiative.

Outstanding Americans carefully recruited from a corps of volunteers, the members of the Order have one thing in common: They were all heroes in the "real" world, in ways both great and small. Rigorously trained in their astonishing new powers, the team is backed by the finest public relations and marketing that money can buy.

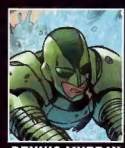
WELCOME TO THE ORDER

TONY STARK
IRON MAN

PEPPER POTTS
HERA

HENRY HELLRUNG
ANTHEM

MAGDALENA MARIE
VEDA



DENNIS MURRAY
HEAVY

MULHOLLAND BLACK
MULHOLLAND

JAMES WA
CALAMITY

BECKY RYAN
ARALUNE

MILO FIELDS
SUPERNAUT

After saving the San Gabriel mountains from the volatile Infernal Man, most of the team's starting lineup was replaced for drinking and partying in violation of their contract's morality and ethics clauses. One of their number, Avona, was found dead on the Los Angeles Metro. The Order's investigation uncovered foul play, and the trail led to the Black Dahlias, a vigilante girl gang, now super-powered, that Mulholland once belonged to. Disgraced for concealing her ties to the gang, Mulholland stormed out on the Order, only to be captured by the Dahlias and injected with super-power inhibiting nanobots. Unbeknownst to the Order, the Dahlias are working for the M.A.N. from S.H.A.D.O.W., a sinister government operative looking to shut the team down permanently.

Miles away, in the desert around Barstow, the team's shapeshifter, Aralune, and the one-man heavy-artillery unit Supernaut were investigating reports of giant monster animals on the rampage, when they also fell prey to S.H.A.D.O.W. The irradiated beasts they were fighting were just bait in a trap, and an electromagnetic discharge rendered Aralune unconscious and fried Supernaut's suit. But the man inside, the veteran Milo Fields, climbed out and dragged Aralune to the relative safety of a cave to await rescue courtesy of his teammates…a rescue that shows no signs of coming.

The Order has their hands full in San Francisco – Namor, the Sub-Mariner, has made a cataclysmic tidal wave rise from the Pacific Ocean, and frozen it in place just off the shore using Atlantean technology. Emerging from the waves, the underwater king explained that the hostile gesture was meant to protect his people from surface-world aggression, and surrendered himself into the custody of the Order.

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REMOVE THE BATTERIES FROM THE RECORDER.
OUR LITTLE CHAT HAPPENS OFF THE RECORD OR NOT AT ALL.
AS YOU WISH, NAMOR.
PRINCE NAMOR, SOVEREIGN MONARCH OF WHAT WAS ONCE ATLANTIS BUT IS NOW AN UNDERWATER ABATTOIR, COURTESY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
... MY RECORDS HERE SAY IT'S NAMOR MCKENZIE.
YOUR RECORDS LIE.
THAT'S THE NAME OF THE PIG THAT RAPED MY MOTHER.
I RENOUNCE THAT NAME, AND EVERYTHING ELSE YOU GENOCIDAL MADMEN HAVE INFLICTED UPON MY PEOPLE.
I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S NOT HOW--
ALL OF MY RECORDS SAY YOUR FATHER WAS IN FACT QUITE HEROIC AND HE--
LIES.
ALL LIES BUILT TO EXCUSE AWAY THE OCEANS OF BLOOD GENERATED BY THE GENOCIDAL TENDENCIES OF THE SURFACE-DWELLING AMERICAN.
YOU AND YOUR KIND HAVE A REAL TASTE FOR IT, DON'T YOU FIND?
YOU HAVE FOUR GENOCIDES UPON YOUR CONSCIENCE, SURFACE MAN.
THE BLOODSHED YOU'VE INFLICTED UPON ME AND MINE ARE BUT A DROP IN THOSE OCEANS.

AHH--
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.
IN FACT, THAT CONTRADICTS ALMOST EVERY--
OUR RECORDS SAY YOUR MOTHER CHOSE TO STAY ON THE, ER, SURFACE WORLD AND WAS PURSUED BY ATLANTEAN COMMANDOS, AT THE BEHEST OF YOUR MATERNAL GRANDFATHER.
YOU CAN READ IT, HERE, YOU CAN MAKE--
IF THERE ARE CORRECTIONS OR... I MEAN...
IF YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE S.H.I.E.L.D. HAS THE PROPER-- THAT YOUR LIFE'S STORY IS ACCURATE AND--
--FEEL FREE. IT SAYS HERE YOU WERE BORN AND RAISED IN ATLANTIS, HALF HUMAN, HALF ATLANTEAN, TO HATE SURFACE-DWELLERS.
THE REST OF THIS ALL PRETTY MUCH JIBES WITH MY RECOLLECTION OF EVENTS, SO...
LOOK--PRINCE--YOUR MAJESTY--I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW TO ADDRESS YOU--BUT...
BUT WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH HERE?
I DON'T--I WANT TO HELP. I REALLY, REALLY WANT TO HELP.
BUT YOU'VE PUT A TSUNAMI ON PAUSE JUST OFF THE COAST OF SAN FRANCISCO.
AS LEADER OF THE ORDER, I WAS CERTAINLY OBLIGATED TO TAKE YOU INTO CUSTODY. BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE--
PRINCE, WHY WOULDN'T YOU GO INTO S.H.I.E.L.D. CUSTODY?
BECAUSE S.H.I.E.L.D. IS RUN BY TONY STARK.
AND I REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE TONY STARK'S AUTHORITY. I AM IN YOUR CUSTODY UNTIL A MORE PROPER AUTHORITY PRESENTS ITSELF.
LET'S SAY SUSAN RICHARDS AND THE FANTASTIC FOUR, BUT I'M FLEXIBLE.

I'M TURNING MYSELF *IN* FOR WHAT I CAN ONLY ASSUME WILL BE *IMPRISONMENT* BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.
AND RATHER THAN HAVE EVERY TELEVISION CAMERA IN THE WORLD SHOWING *IRON MAN* LEADING ME OFF TO THE JAIL CELL IN WHICH I WILL ONE DAY DIE OF OLD AGE, I WANT IT TO BE *YOU.*
THE *NEW KID.*

THE ORDER

7: NAMOR -OR- THE DESPERATE HOUR

WRITTEN BY **MATT FRACTION** *ART BY* **BARRY KITSON** *INKS BY* **JON SIBAL & BARRY KITSON**
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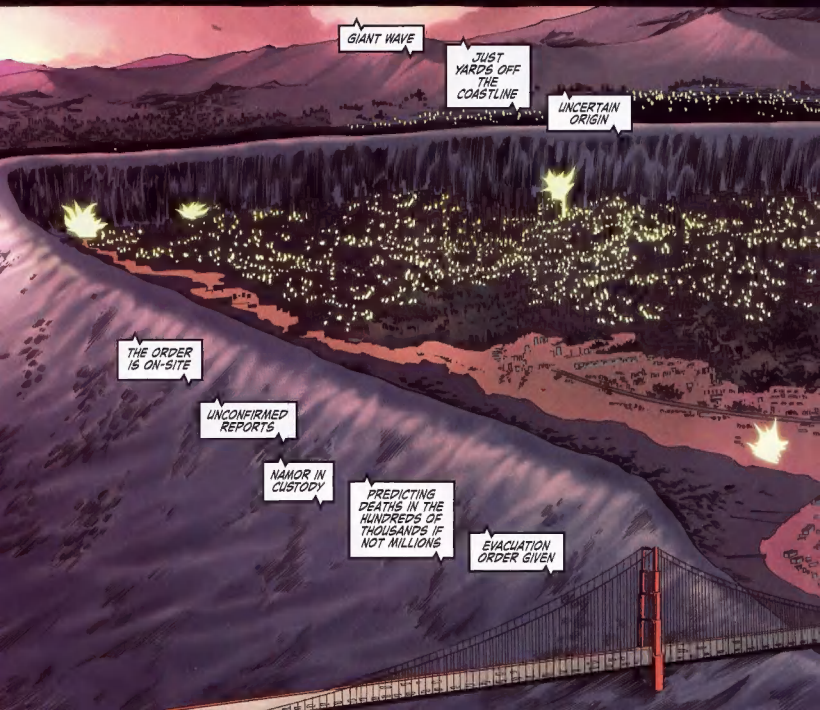


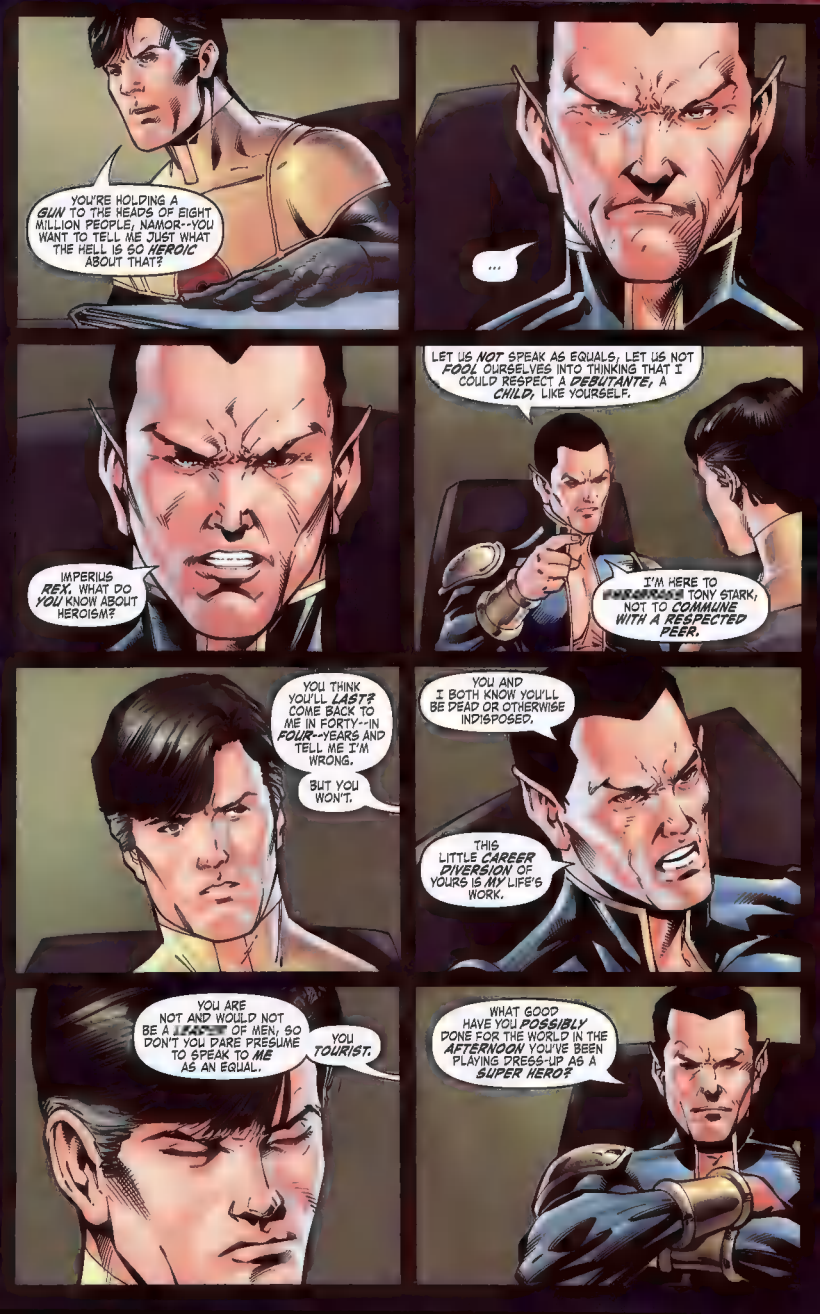
"So, all during the '90s and, you know, for the first half of this decade, we had opportunities to get evacuation plans in place, better communications in place."
--Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Homeland Security
OKAY. OKAY.
MULHOLLAND, ARALUNE AND SUPERNAUT ARE ALL OFFLINE, AND ANTHEM IS WITH NAMOR. THAT LEAVES HEAVY, CALAMITY, AND VEDA IN THE FIELD.
EVERY NATIONAL EMERGENCY AGENCY FROM S.H.I.E.L.D. TO F.E.M.A. HAS BEEN CONTACTED AND IS EN ROUTE TO HELP WITH THE EVACUATIONS, BUT THEY ALL HAVE A SCRAMBLE-TIME OF ABOUT AN HOUR.
SO JUST KEEP IT TOGETHER FOR SIXTY MINUTES AND WE'LL BE OKAY.
"We've certainly learned a lot of lessons from Katrina, from Rita. Rita was better than Katrina. We're doing a better job planning."
--Michael Chertoff, Secretary of Homeland Security
I GOT THE IDEA FOR THE WAVE FROM YOU PEOPLE, ACTUALLY. THINK OF IT AS MY OWN BERLIN WALL, THERE TO KEEP YOUR KIND FROM HARMING MINE.
AND AS FOR ME--I'LL BE MORE VALUABLE AS A MARTYR, DON'T YOU THINK?
"The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and will to carry on."
--Walter Lippmann, journalist

POUND FOR POUND AND DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR, THAT FIGHT CAUSED AS MUCH DAMAGE AS THE ATTACK ON *PEARL HARBOR*.
THAT WAS TERROR. THE SURFACE WORLD HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
BIRTHS ARE BLOODY, MESSY THINGS.
AND THAT WAS THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN AGE.
AND HERE, AT THE END OF THAT AGE, A MAD'MAN HAS COMMITTED AN ACT OF INSANE BLOODSHED UPON YOUR PEOPLE. YOUR NATION, THE MOST POWERFUL ON THE SURFACE, RESPONDS BY *DESTROYING* MINE.
DEFENDING MY PEOPLE FROM YOURS, I WOULD COMMIT AN ACT OF *TERROR*?
SO BE IT, WHELP. AND WOULD IT BE THAT THAT TERROR DRIVES YOUR KIND TO ITS VERY *WORST*.

GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY!!
JEEZ LOUISE, WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?
STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT!
EVERYBODY'S TRYING TO GET AWAY FROM THE DAMN WATER!
SO STOP! PUSHING!
CALAMITY!
IT'S ANARCHY EVERYWHERE. RATHER THAN STAY TOGETHER, WE NEED TO SPLIT UP.
ISN'T THAT LIKE PUTTING A BAND-AID ON A MASSIVE HEAD WOUND?
THREE BAND-AIDS.
ON A MASSIVE HEAD WOUND.

HAH.
SO, WHAT, SUPERNAUT, ARALUNE AND MULHOL--
GRRAAAHH!!
--LUGHKKK
DAMMIT!
JAMES!
KOOOOOOM
WHAT THE HELL IS THE MATTER WITH YOU?!?
THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANT US TO DO! PANIC! TEAR EACH OTHER APART!
WE ALL GOTTA STICK TOGETHER RIGHT NOW!

YOU WERE ON *OUR SIDE* IN THE *WAR.*
I WAS *AGAINST HITLER.*
THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE--JUST ASK *STALIN.*
STALIN'S *DEAD.*
IS THAT A *THREAT?*
ABSOLUTELY *NOT.* JUST--STALIN KILLED MILLIONS. *MILLIONS.* DO YOU REALLY WANT TO BE THOUGHT OF LIKE... LIKE *STALIN?*
I ASSURE YOU THAT, TO MY PEOPLE, I WILL BE REMEMBERED A *HERO.*


YOU'RE HOLDING A GUN TO THE HEADS OF EIGHT MILLION PEOPLE, NAMOR--YOU WANT TO TELL ME JUST WHAT THE HELL IS SO HEROIC ABOUT THAT?
...
IMPERIUS REX. WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HEROISM?
LET US NOT SPEAK AS EQUALS, LET US NOT FOOL OURSELVES INTO THINKING THAT I COULD RESPECT A DEBUTANTE, A CHILD, LIKE YOURSELF.
I'M HERE TO [redacted] TONY STARK; NOT TO COMMUNE WITH A RESPECTED PEER.
YOU THINK YOU'LL LAST? COME BACK TO ME IN FORTY--IN FOUR--YEARS AND TELL ME I'M WRONG.
BUT YOU WON'T.
YOU AND I BOTH KNOW YOU'LL BE DEAD OR OTHERWISE INDISPOSED.
THIS LITTLE CAREER DIVERSION OF YOURS IS MY LIFE'S WORK.
YOU ARE NOT AND WOULD NOT BE A [redacted] OF MEN, SO DON'T YOU DARE PRESUME TO SPEAK TO ME AS AN EQUAL.
YOU TOURIST.
WHAT GOOD HAVE YOU POSSIBLY DONE FOR THE WORLD IN THE AFTERNOON YOU'VE BEEN PLAYING DRESS-UP AS A SUPER HERO?

ROGER THAT, HERA--THE SUPER HEROES HAVE ARRIVED IN THE MISSION AND ARE GOING TO WORK ON EVAC AND FIRE CONTROL.
THE GOOD GUYS ARE BREAKING THROUGH ALL OVER. WE'VE GOT NATIONAL GUARD, REINFORCED POLICE, AND FIRE DISPATCHED AND ARRIVING ALL OVER THE BAY--
AND S.H.I.E.L.D. ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES AWAY FROM BIVOUACKING AT MULTIPLE SITES WITH MULTIPLE HELICARRIERS.
VEDA? WHAT'S YOUR TWENTY?
WORKING ON HOSPITAL AND HOSPICE EVAC.
HOSPITAL A
WE'VE GOT TWO HOSPITALS EMPTIED ALREADY AND PREPPED FOR MOVEMENT AND WE'RE WORKING ON NUMBER THREE AS FAST AS WE CAN.
THANKS FOR THE SEGUE, VEDA--
SPEAKING OF FAST, WHERE ARE YOU, CALAMITY?

THEY'RE RIOTING AND LOOTING IN OAKLAND STILL.
I'M DOING MY BEST TO ROUND UP THE RINGLEADERS AND SHOO OFF THE THIEVES BUT-- HOLD ON--
OOGITTA-BOOGITTA!
HO-LEE--
SCRAM!
HONESTLY, IT FEELS LIKE I'M DOING AS MUCH *HARM* AS GOOD.
DAMMIT.
HANG ON.
WHOOAAA---
KKSSSHHHHH
WHAT THE *HELL* KIND OF SUPER HERO ARE YOU?!?

THIS IS WHY I'M HERE, MR. HELLRUNG. THAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS LITTLE PIECE OF POLITICAL THEATER.
I AM MORE POWERFUL SAFE AND SOUND IN THE BOSOM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES THAN I'D EVER BE LEADING THEM BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE OCEAN FLOOR...
...WHERE I'D ENDLESSLY TRY TO CONVINCE THEM, AGAINST ALL HOPE AND LOGIC, THAT THINGS WILL ONE DAY GET BETTER.
THAT ONE DAY THEIR HOME WILL BE RETURNED TO THEM.
YOUR HIGHNESS, I--YOU'RE PLAYING ON A SCALE I CAN'T IMAGINE--
--LET ALONE COMPETE ON, BUT--
--BEFORE THIS IS OVER, YOU MUST BRING THE TSUNAMI WALL DOWN.
I CANNOT ALLOW YOU TO THREATEN MY PEOPLE IN PERPETUITY.
WHELP.
DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THESE THINGS WORK? AS YOU SAY, YOU CANNOT COMPETE ON MY LEVEL, SO WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU BARGAINING WITH?
MY POWERS--THEY'RE ALL BASED ON SUPERCELL THUNDERSTORMS, YOU KNOW?
THAT'S TONY STARK FOR YOU, I SUPPOSE.
HE ALWAYS DID LOVE THOR.
I CAN STIMULATE AND SEPARATE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHARGES IN THE AIR AROUND ME AND...WELL, CREATE ELECTRICITY.
WRRRRRT--
...WHERE I'D ENDLESSLY TRY TO CONVINCE THEM, AGAINST ALL HOPE AND LOGIC, THAT THINGS WILL ONE DAY GET BETTER.
BRING THE WATER-WALL DOWN, YOUR HIGHNESS, OR I WALK OUT OF THIS ROOM AND PLAY THIS BACK FOR EVERY CAMERA IN CALIFORNIA.

I'M SORRY, FOLKS--BREAKING NEWS SEEMS TO BE INDICATING--
YES--THAT'S RIGHT, OKAY--BREAKING NEWS, LIVE FROM THE SCENE OF--
--LOWERING BACK INTO THE SEA RIGHT NOW--
--THE DARKNESS OF NIGHT MAKING IT HARD TO SEE WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY WHAT'S HAPPENING; BUT WITHOUT A DOUBT THE WAVE IS RECEDING--
--LOS NIVELES DE AGUA ESTÁN DISMINUYENDO--
T
--GONE, THE WAVE IS JUST GONE--
MY GOD, IT'S A MIRACLE, IT'S--
--WE'RE GOING LIVE NOW TO THE ORDER HEADQUARTERS IN DOWNTOWN LOS ANGE--
--INTO THE CUSTODY OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, I HAVE LOWERED THE OCEAN WALL BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES, HAVING BEEN...
...PERSUADED...
...THAT SUCH A GESTURE WAS NOT A PATH TO PEACE BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES. ANY QUESTIONS?
PRINCE NAMOR! WHO CONVINCED YOU TO LOWER THE WALL AND NOT ATTACK THE SURFACE WORLD?
HENRY HELLRUNG OF THE ORDER.
UH.
WHO?
HENRY HELLRUNG, LEADER OF THE ORDER, ESCORTED ME FROM SHORE TO CITY TO AWAIT THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
SPREAD THE WORD, SURFACE-DWELLERS.
THE ORDER SAVED CALIFORNIA.

I DIDN'T SAY THAT.
I DIDN'T TELL HIM TO SAY THAT.
HE JUST--
I KNOW.
I DIDN'T--
I KNOW.
IT'S-- I MEAN, I LISTENED TO YOUR TAPE AND IT'S A RIDICULOUS ASSERTION TO MAKE AND--
HENRY, IT'S NOTHING *LIKE* YOU. I KNOW YOU'D NEVER ASK HIM TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

NEXT ISSUE